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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TBILISI 000125

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PBTS](#) [EAID](#) [RS](#) [GG](#)
SUBJECT: GEORGIA APPROVES STATE STRATEGY ON OCCUPIED
TERRITORIES

REF: A. 09 TBILISI 2204
[1](#)B. BASS-KAIDANOW EMAILS 12/21/09

Classified By: Ambassador John R. Bass for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. The Government of Georgia approved the "State Strategy on Occupied Territories: Engagement Through Collaboration" on January 27. The strategy presents the government's vision for engaging the disputed territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and preventing their isolation. State Minister of Reintegration Temuri Yakobashvili coordinated his efforts on the strategy with international partners, including the United States, who provided suggestions at several stages during the drafting of the document. The government now plans to focus on the development of an Action Plan for implementation of the strategy, which the Georgians expect to take approximately six months. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Comment. The final version of the strategy does incorporate a number of the Quad's suggestions and is a considerable improvement over earlier drafts (reftels). It begins with a positive vision for Georgia's future and emphasizes Georgia's commitment to the non-use of force to reintegrate the territories up front in the preamble. The strategy also acknowledges past mistakes made by all parties and the resulting suffering of the civilian population on all sides. While contentious phrases still remain in the document, the language overall reflects the most forward-leaning step toward the separatist regions that we have seen from this government.

[1](#)3. (C) Several concerns remain, however. While the current status review section, which details Georgia's version of the history of the conflict, was shortened and revised to present more factual circumstances, the very existence of such a section may be viewed as provocative and may shift discussion of the strategy away from the future and back to the past. In addition, in a section on human rights, the ethnic cleansing of ethnic Georgians is singled out as a focus of special concern, undermining the claim made in the document of equal treatment. The final version also includes a glossary, not seen in earlier drafts, which uses controversial and non-neutral language, clearly intended to appease some government hardliners. End comment.

GOVERNMENT APPROVES AND PRESENTS STRATEGY

[1](#)4. (C) On January 27, the Government of Georgia announced its approval of the "State Strategy on Occupied Territories: Engagement Through Collaboration." In statements to the press, Yakobashvili said the strategy outlines peaceful measures for the de-occupation of the separatist regions, IDP return and safety and the restoration of territorial integrity. He added that "we are saying no to the isolation of the populations in the breakaway regions...We will ensure

conditions for their education, healthcare, cultural and economic development....A neutral status working group will be formed and headed by an international organization to coordinate the strategy." According to the government, the strategy will be presented to the international community, first to the Council of Europe, as well as to OSCE, the UN and the EU. Yakobashvili told the Ambassador that now that the strategy is in place, we can begin to plan projects, even without an Action Plan. The document is available publicly on [www.smr.gov.ge/uploads/file/SRM-Strategy-en.p df.](http://www.smr.gov.ge/uploads/file/SRM-Strategy-en.pdf)
Qon www.smr.gov.ge/uploads/file/SRM-Strategy-en.p df.

YAKOBASHVILI TRIES TO DEFLECT HARD-LINERS

15. (C) Yakobashvili told the Ambassador that during discussions with the government, he was surprised at some of the wild suggestions he received from hard-liner colleagues, such as that the text should refer to the de facto authorities as "puppet regimes." The addition of a glossary, which incorporates some of the suggestions the Ministry received from the government, was included as a way to pacify these colleagues while avoiding the use of potentially controversial language in the text of the strategy itself.

COORDINATION WITH THE ABKHAZ?

16. (C) Yakobashvili speculated that, although Abkhaz de facto "minister of foreign affairs" Sergey Shamba may feel constrained in his public comments about the strategy at first -- especially right now when he is seeking the de facto "prime minister" position -- Shamba can nevertheless accept much of the strategy in the long term. Yakobashvili indicated that he has been in close contact with the Abkhaz

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de facto authorities, primarily Shamba, during the preparation of the strategy, who have reacted positively in particular to some of the concrete proposals in the strategy.

THOUGHTS ON IMPLEMENTATION

17. (C) According to Yakobashvili, a major challenge now will be organizing implementing mechanisms. The Ministry will form working groups to address different elements of the Plan and Ministry officials plan to travel extensively during the next several months to gather suggestions from around the world. Yakobashvili is currently leaning toward UNDP as an umbrella organization for implementation; while they would not necessarily implement projects, they could provide transportation and other logistical suggestions. The Abkhaz de facto authorities proposed a "Commission for Humanitarian Programs" under the Geneva process to oversee activities. While the Georgians do not necessarily object to such a formulation, they do not like the idea of putting this under Geneva, which would inject the Russians into the process.
BASS